

## Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EB-11 FEA-02 SCI-06 INT-08 COME-00 TRSE-00

DRC-01 IO-14 EURE-00 /145 W  
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P R 181908Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7216

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00853

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: ELECTION FEVER COOLING

1. PM HEATH TOLD COMMONS TODAY HE HAS INVITED TUC TO MEET WITH HIM AND ENERGY CHIEF LORD CARRINGTON ON MONDAY TO DISCUSS WORKING WEEK, GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION AND LAST WEEK'S DOWNING STREET'S TUC-GOVERNMENT TALKS. NO DECISION ABOUT MOVING TO FOUR-DAY WEEK HAD BEEN REACHED. ATTACKED BY WILSON FOR FOLLOWING WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN OPPORTUNISTIC POLICY, HEATH WAS SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE IN EXPLAINING TO COMMONS WHY GOVERNMENT NOW FELT ABLE TO RELAX ITS ENERGY CONTROLS WHEN ONLY TWO DAYS BEFORE SOME  
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MINISTERS WERE SUGGESTING THAT EVEN FURTHER RESTRICTIONS

MIGHT BE REQUIRED. THIS, TOGETHER WITH HIS FAILURE YESTERDAY TO SIGNAL CLEARLY HIS ELECTION INTENTIONS, IS INEVITABLY TAKING SOME OF HEAT OUT OF CURRENT ELECTION FEVER.

2. UNDERSTANDABLY, THERE HAS BEEN A FLURRY OF SPECULATION IN PRESS AND POLITICAL CIRCLES ABOUT REASONS FOR WHAT LOOKS LIKE A CHANGE OF INTENTIONS ON GOVERNMENT'S PART. ONE LINE IS THAT EARLIER CABINET SOLIDARITY IN RECOMMENDING SNAP ELECTION TO PM HAS COME UNSTUCK. ANOTHER IS THAT PM HIMSELF HAD NEVER MADE UP HIS MIND FOR AN EARLY ELECTION AND HIS MORE ENTHUSIASTIC CABINET MEMBERS SIMPLY GOT TOO FAR OUT IN FRONT OF HIM ON ISSUE. NORMAN WILLIS, ACTING SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF TUC IN ABSENCE OF LEN MURRAY, HAS TOLD US HE CONSIDERS HEATH IS EITHER A) MAKING A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO EXAMINE TUC OFFER, OR B) CLEARING DECKS TO SHOW HE IS TRYING HIS BEST TO SOLVE MINERS' DISPUTE BEFORE CALLING AN ELECTION. A THIRD POSSIBILITY IS THAT WITH SOMEWHAT MORE OPTIMISTIC ECONOMIC ASSESSMENTS WHICH HAVE APPEARED THIS WEEK, HEATH MAY FEEL HE IS IN POSITION TO CONTINUE CURRENT POLICIES DESIGNED TO PRESSURE MINERS INTO SETTLEMENT WITHOUT VIOLATING STAGE III AND WITHOUT RISKING AN UNACCEPTABLE ECONOMIC DISLOCATION.

3. IF PM HAS DECIDED TO MAKE ANOTHER SERIOUS EFFORT TO SOLVE MINERS' DISPUTE BEFORE APPEALING TO ELECTORATE, WHICH COULD BE CASE, TALKS COULD TAKE SOME TIME AND LIKELIHOOD OF A FEBRUARY ELECTION RECEDES. NEVERTHELESS, SITUATION REMAINS VERY FLUID.

SOHM

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